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Linda McCulloch  
Superintendent

To: Interested Persons

Re: **Coordinated School Health: Implications for Teacher Preparation Standards and for School Accreditation Standards**

Background

The Healthy Schools Network (HSN) is a national effort initiated by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA) and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In Montana, the collaborating partners in the HSN are the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE), the Montana School Boards Association (MSBA), and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI). The HSN effort promotes a coordinated approach to school health. This "coordinated school health" approach is designed to improve the health of children and their capacity to learn.

The Montana Board of Public Education was provided a discussion paper on coordinated school health that included recommendations to improve health enhancement instruction. This improvement would come about by better ensuring the delivery of an effective health enhancement program that would have a greater impact on the health of children and their capacity to learn. The discussion paper made it clear that:

- to make health enhancement instruction most effective and most useful to students, it needs to be delivered by teachers who are knowledgeable and competent in the content matter, and that
- health enhancement instruction – the health-related *and* the physical activity-related components – needs sufficient time at all grade levels to ensure that a program meeting the requirements of the standards is delivered to students.

Supplementary information in support of health enhancement was provided to the BPE via the findings report from a 2002 survey of Montana adults. The report is titled *Montana School Health Issues* and can be reviewed at [www.opi.state.mt.us/mahperd](http://www.opi.state.mt.us/mahperd). The report clearly shows strong support for health education and physical education in Montana schools.

Requested Action

The discussion paper provided background information and recommendations on teacher preparation requirements and on the time requirements for health enhancement instruction. The two pages accompanying this memo are excerpted from the discussion paper. Please review the following information and then provide your insight as to the advantages or disadvantages of pursuing administrative rule changes to implement the recommendations. Provide your comments in writing to: Office of Public Instruction, Attn: Rick Chiotti, PO Box 202501, Helena MT 59620-2501 or by e-mail to [rchiotti@state.mt.us](mailto:rchiotti@state.mt.us).

*(Note: A copy of the discussion paper is available upon request. Contact Rick Chiotti at the Office of Public Instruction, 406-444-1963 or [rchiotti@state.mt.us](mailto:rchiotti@state.mt.us)).*

✓ Information on Teacher Preparation Requirements

Recently in Montana there has been an increase in the number of elementary-endorsed teachers (endorsement code 00) that are being assigned to teach health enhancement in elementary and middle school. Since elementary-endorsed teachers can teach any subject area at the middle school level, this makes these teachers attractive additions to middle school staff. The concern lies in the quality of the health enhancement program that a student receives when an elementary-endorsed teacher provides the health enhancement content for any or all of the "middle school" grades (typically grade 5 through grade 8). The undergraduate elementary teacher preparation a college student receives may only include six semester credits or less of health and physical education (health enhancement). A teacher with this limited exposure to health-related and physical activity-related instructional content is likely not adequately prepared to deliver to students a program that is required by Montana Accreditation Standards (specifically, the content standards, benchmarks and performance standards for Health Enhancement). Anecdotal reports show that it is far too common that elementary-endorsed classroom teachers seek out health enhancement teachers (those teachers with endorsements in K-12 health and physical education) and ask "What do I do?"

Recommendation:

**Consider a revision to current teacher preparation standards**

Consider a revision to current teacher preparation standards to increase health-related coursework for elementary teachers (00 endorsement). Strengthen professional preparation requirements in terms of credit hours and course content to better prepare elementary endorsed teachers to provide competent health enhancement instruction. A suggested minimum number of credits to teach health enhancement in grades 5-12 would be 10 semester hours. (This number of hours would provide necessary exposure to the program, its content, and its pedagogy. In fact, this should be considered as a minimum for all content areas, not just health enhancement.) Language could be added in Appendix A "Clarification of Teaching Assignments" in the Accreditation Standards under the specific credit requirement. Inserting language such as "*10 semester credits in the assigned subject area for departmentalized schools grades 5-8 if endorsed in 00*" could help address this issue. It should be noted that this language would not impact certification or the ability of a school district to hire elementary endorsed staff. However, it would help ensure that more qualified staff are providing more knowledgeable and more competent instruction.

Reader Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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✓ Time Requirements for Health-related Instruction

Time requirements for health enhancement instruction in elementary grades are not defined in the accreditation standards. However, Project Excellence (the process used by the Montana Board of Public Education to restructure public school educational programs and outline goals for those educational programs for the 21<sup>st</sup> century) intended that health enhancement instruction be a daily occurrence at the elementary level. Current accreditation standards state that a health enhancement program must meet the educational requirements (i.e., the content standards and benchmarks) of health enhancement. The current standards do provide a coursework unit minimum (which can be considered a "time" requirement) at the junior high and high school levels, but the elementary program has no specific time requirement. Rather than a specific time requirement, the elementary program must be aligned to the program area standards and must enable students to meet the content and performance standards, thus lending itself to the earlier intent of Project Excellence (which was that health enhancement instruction be a daily occurrence at the elementary level).

Recommendation:

**Clarify the time requirement for elementary health enhancement**

According to the Montana Accreditation Standards (specifically ARM 10.55.901), elementary programs must be aligned to the program area standards and must enable students to meet the content and performance standards. In order to provide adequate instructional time in elementary health enhancement programs to ensure that the program is fully aligned with the standards, to recognize the importance of physical activity and health education in the health status of students, and to continue the intent of Project Excellence regarding elementary health enhancement, the BPE should clarify that elementary health enhancement instruction should be a daily occurrence. This clarification could be made in ARM 10.55.901 Basic Education Program: Elementary by adding the wording "*Elementary health enhancement instruction shall be a daily occurrence*" to the current wording in the rule.

Reader Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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